



State of Connecticut
Department of Aging and Disability Services
Office of the Commissioner

Testimony before the Human Services Committee

March 10, 2022

SB 198 - *An Act Concerning the Advisory Board for Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Deafblind*

HB 5230 - *An Act Concerning Standards for Interpreters for Deaf, Deafblind and Hard of Hearing Persons*

HB 5334 - *An Act Concerning a Study of Long-Term Services and Supports*

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, Senator Berthel, Representative Case and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee - my name is Amy Porter, Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) and I thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 198 and House Bills 5230 and 5334.

We support Senate Bill 198 and thank the committee for raising this proposal. This bill brings the law up to date with current circumstances. The bill removes the Commissioner of the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) as one of the chairpersons of the Advisory Board for Persons Who Are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind. While it has been a privilege for me to serve in this role, I fully support this change as it allows for more control and input from the advocates and groups whose voices we most want to hear. The bill also provides for two co-chairs, rather than three, which we have learned works better.

We also support House Bill 5230 which aims to improve interpreting services for people who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing in Connecticut.

The bill updates the language of the statute to be inclusive of persons who are DeafBlind. The bill also expands the ability to use interpreters who are accredited by our neighboring state of Massachusetts by now allowing Massachusetts interpreters who are credentialed in legal and medical settings to work in these settings in Connecticut. This will provide greater access to specialized interpreting services and help to address the workforce gap in these areas.

In addition, the bill seeks to expand access to information for the community. Our agency has already begun the process of providing useful information on our website for people in Connecticut who are Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing. We look forward to creating the more comprehensive and central information resource envisioned in the bill

We also support the bill's intention to maintain strict standards for interpreters and ensure that they hold all of the appropriate credentials required by our statutes. As we are not an agency with expertise in criminal law and law enforcement, we would defer to the legislature to determine the most appropriate level of infraction. We must also point out that our agency does not have any law enforcement function or capability and could not serve in the role of enforcing this provision.

House Bill 5334 asks the Department of Social Services (DSS) to perform a study of long-term care needs in Connecticut and then deliver a study and recommendations to the legislature on this topic by July 1, 2023. The bill also asks DSS to consult with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) on both the study and the report. This is certainly a very important matter; however, we respectfully oppose this bill since it is made unnecessary by similar work already being done by DSS on an ongoing basis. In fact, beginning in 2013 and every three years thereafter, DSS has compiled data on this subject for its Strategic Plan to Rebalance Long-Term Services and Supports. The Connecticut Long-Term Care Planning Committee also compiles data and provides planning input on this same subject. The most recent plan, titled “Balancing the System: Working Toward Real Choice for Long-Term Services and Supports in Connecticut,” was revised in 2021 and submitted to the legislature in December 2021. It can be accessed at: https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/OPM/HHS/LTC_Planning_Committee/2022-LTSS-Plan_FINAL_Submission.pdf. The work of the Connecticut Long-Term Care Planning Committee informs DSS' Strategic Plan to Rebalance Long-Term Services and Supports. Given all of the research and work already being performed by the state on the issue of long-term care needs, we believe that the passage of Senate Bill 174 would only duplicate these efforts.

In closing, I thank the committee for your attention to these important topics. I would be happy to answer any questions that members may have and look forward continuing our work together.